

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department is responsible for administering social services programs for eligible needy families and individuals in Erie County. Services provided are based on the financial need of the client and are directed at encouraging client independence and self-sufficiency by providing basic care and protection while promoting self-reliance.

The major programs include Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps, Medical Assistance, Home Energy Assistance, Child Support, Employment Services, Day Care and a broad range of preventive and supportive services to children, youth, families and adults. Client eligibility criteria, benefit levels, administrative procedures and administrative systems are all prescribed by law and regulation.

Listed below is a listing and brief description of the services provided with contact information. Additional information on all programs may be obtained by calling [716] 858-8000 or on the Erie County Web Site at www.erie.gov under Department of Social Services.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

ERIE COUNTY WORKS CENTER

In keeping with the principles of Welfare Reform and a focus on Work First initiatives, the Erie County Department of Social Services provides a strategically different approach at the first point of entry, the **Erie County Works Center**.

Cash assistance is temporary and time-limited for a period of five (5) years for families with children and twenty-four (24) months for single individuals and childless couples.

ECDSS employees work collaboratively with every client to overcome barriers and obstacles to help achieve economic self-reliance. As part of the application process, individuals are seen by employment counselors who evaluate an applicants' job skills, ability to work, and conduct a New York State drug and alcohol screening.

Most applicants for Temporary Assistance are required to participate in job search activities to be eligible for assistance. This may include a three-week long supervised job search (Job Club) to help locate employment. If an applicant does not find employment and the Temporary Assistance case opens, they are placed in a Workfare assignment.

EMERGENCY SERVICES / HOMELESS UNIT

The Homeless Unit provides direct assistance for placement of homeless individuals. The unit coordinates supports to the homeless population through contracts with community based organizations which include the City Mission. Salvation Army, Haven House for victims of domestic violence, Cornerstone Manor and Crisis Services.

The Homeless Team is a specialized team that handles the complex needs of the homeless population. The team works to establish safe and permanent long term housing supports.

Emergency Services staff provides assistance in preventing evictions by making direct payments, including to landlords providing reimbursements for security deposits. Additionally, the unit is able to assist individuals with gas and electric arrears to prevent utility shut-offs and assist in getting utilities turned back on.

Location and Hours of Operation: Applicants applying for Temporary Assistance and/or Emergency Services must appear at:

Department of Social Services 158 Pearl Street – Rath Building Buffalo, NY 14202 Monday – Friday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Contacting the Erie County Works Center

Emergency Housing/Services
[716] 858-6265
Erie County Works Center Employment Team
[716] 858-4661



The Comprehensive Employment Division

[CED] provides integrated employment and training services for Temporary Assistance clients and Non-Temporary Assistance Food Stamp recipients.

In addition, services are available for recipients who request services and non-custodial parents of a TANF-eligible child.

CED provides assessments, job skills training, day care services, substance abuse treatment monitoring, and coordinates Workfare assignments.

ECDSS utilizes a 'Work First' approach to welfare reform and expects all clients capable of work to enter employment at the earliest time possible. Work First initiates immediate job search upon application and prior to cases being opened, and mandatory participation in "Job Clubs", which are supervised and specific group job searches.

If the initial job search activities fail to result in employment, **Workfare**, a short-term vocational training, community service, or other employment assignment is required for all active clients.

<u>PIVOT</u> <u>(Placing Individuals in Vital Opportunity</u> <u>Training)</u>

The Erie County Department of Social Services implemented a unique wage subsidy program initiative in August of 2000 designed to bridge the gap between the local business community and TANF recipients.

PIVOT is based on the premise that Welfare Reform requires the support and active involvement of the business community to succeed. This program provides quality job opportunities for the employable TANF population while being able to serve as a resource for the hiring needs of local employers.

The program provides employers that partner with the program employable TANF clients, who are prescreened. This reduces the employers interviewing time, but more importantly provides them with three months of subsidized wages. The company provides the client with on-the-job training and in many cases the Erie County Department of Social Services continues to provide case management in the form of supportive services such as daycare and transportation to support the clients' transition to work.

To date the program has placed 1,800 TANF clients into employment, working with 400 employers throughout Western New York. This generally results in the closing of the TANF case but there are some situations in which cases would remain active; 95% of the clients placed result in their TANF case being closed.

The average wage for TANF placements through the PIVOT program is \$8.02 per hour. But perhaps the most significant aspect is the retention rate for the clients placed. Since the program's inception, the program has sustained a six-month retention rate of 85% for clients placed.

This remarkable success can be directly attributable to the time dedicated to matching the education and skill level of the TANF clients to the workforce needs. This is accomplished primarily by following various labor market trends and identifying workforce needs. In addition, we believe that the simplistic design of the program lends it to be more readily accepted by the employment community.

Job Development Services:

[716] 858-1060

Employment Training Services:

[716] 858-1000

Multi-Abuse Assessment Team [MAAT]

The Multi-Abuse Assessment Team is a specialized Temporary Assistance unit that works with individuals in receipt of assistance who are experiencing drug or alcohol related problems. MAAT counselors provide recipients referrals to approved drug and alcohol treatment providers and monitor treatment compliance and progress. They assist in the development of job openings and placing recipients in suitable work situations or training programs.

Location:

290 Main Street - 9th Floor Buffalo, New York 14202

Hours of operation: 8:30am - 4:00pm

and by appointment

Telephone: [716] 858-1319 Fax: [716] 858-1316

OOD STAMP PROGRAM

The Food Stamp Program is a Federal nutrition assistance program that supplements the food budgets of low income households in order to reduce hunger and improve nutrition and health.

To be eligible for Food Stamp benefits, households must pass an income limit test. Resources are not considered in determining Food Stamp Program eligibility for most Food Stamp applicants.

Expedited Food Stamps:

A household may be eligible for expedited service if they meet the following criteria:

- Meet all eligibility requirements and are under the established income limits; and
- Have not received food stamps in the applying month; and
- Have not received expedited food stamps in the past, or, if previously received expedited food stamps, have submitted all the verifica tions that have been requested; and
- Have less than \$100.00 in cash, savings, or other liquid resources; and expect to receive less than \$150.00 gross income during the month of application; and

 If the total gross income during the month of application plus the total liquid resources is less than the total of the monthly rent or mortgage payment including utility expenses.

Individuals who qualify for Expedited Food Stamp benefits should be able to access benefits within (5) five days of the date of application.

Application for Food Stamp Benefits

Applicants who are applying for Food Stamp Benefits may call [716] 858-7239 to request an application to be mailed to them OR by completing an application through a facilitated enroller.

MyBenefits is a web-based tool that screens potential eligibility for Food Stamps and other work support benefits and enables filing of facilitated Food Stamp application online through a community-based organization. The Erie County Department of Social Services has partnered with *Food for All* to assist applicants in completing the myBenefits application process.

To complete an online self-screening go to www.myBenefits.ny.gov

To file an electronic Food Stamp application contact Kelly Kowalski from *Food for All* at [716] 882-7705.

Applicants applying for **Expedited Food Stamps** should apply in person, Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Erie County Rath Building, 158 Pearl Street, Buffalo, NY 14202.

EDICAL ASSISTANCE

The Medicaid Program is a grouping of Health Care programs for individuals who cannot afford to pay for medical care. All recipients of Medicaid must meet certain State and Federal requirements to be eligible.

Applicants who are applying for Medicaid may call **858 -6244** to request an application.

Family Health Plus (FHP)

Family Health Plus is a program which provides health coverage to adults between the ages of 21 and 64 who do not have insurance but have income above the traditional Medicaid income levels. There is no cost to participate in Family Health Plus. Individuals interested in applying for FHP may do so through one of the following facilitated enrollers:

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Western New York 1-800-888-5407 [716] 887-7520

Univera Community Health [716] 504-0560 800-494-2215

Fidelis Care of New York 1-888-343-3547 [716] 564-3630

If a household's income is too high for Family Health Plus, the household may be eligible for the Healthy New York Program. For more information on Healthy New York call **1-866-432-5849**.

Child Health Plus

Child Health Plus is a health insurance program for children. There are two types of Child Health Plus Coverage:

- Child Health Plus "A" provides Medicaid coverage for children.
- Child Health Plus "B" provides coverage only through specific HMO's.

To be eligible for Child Health Plus "A" or "B", children must be under the age of **19** and be residents of New York State. Whether your child qualifies for Child Health Plus "A" or Child Health Plus "B" depends on gross family income.

Children who are not eligible for Child Health Plus "A" can enroll in Child Health Plus "B" if they do not already have health insurance and are not eligible for coverage under the public employees' state health benefits plan.

For general information about Child Health Plus, call toll-free: **1-800-698-4KIDS** [1-800-698-4543]. The participating insurers/enrollers listed below can help you apply for either Child Health Plus "A" or "B". Please contact them for locations and office hours.

Participating Insurers/Enrollers:

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Western N.Y.

1901 Main Street Buffalo, New York 14208 1-800-888-5407 [716] 887-7520

Buffalo Community Health

205 Park Club Lane Williamsville, New York 14221 [716] 847-0881

Fidelis Care of N.Y.

40 John Glen Drive Amherst, New York 14228 1-888-343-3547 [716] 564-3630 The participating community enrollers can assist you in applying for either Child Health Plus A or B. They will help you fill out the application, collect the necessary documents, and select a health plan. If your income is above the Child Health Plus A level, you will be enrolled directly into Child Health Plus B.

MEDICAID LONG TERM CARE ELIGIBILITY

Nursing Home Units

The Nursing Home Unit is a specialized Medicaid Unit that determines financial eligibility for Medical Assistance for persons in Skilled Nursing Facilities, Intermediate Care Facilities, or in hospitals with a discharge plan that requires placement in a Skilled Nursing Facility.

The application process begins by calling [716] 858-1901 to schedule an appointment for an interview. Most interviews are conducted with a legal representative of the person in need of nursing home care. All interviews are conducted primarily at 9:00 a.m. with a limited number at 10:30 a.m. at the Rath Building, 158 Pearl Street. Buffalo, New York 14202 in Room 230.

Community Alternative System Agency

The Community Alternative Systems Agency, (CASA), located in the Division of Long Term Care is staffed by employees of the Erie County Department of Social Services and Jewish Family Services. CASA's primary

function is to determine the appropriateness and necessity for Medicaid long-term care services and develop suitable care plans for community-based elderly and/or disabled individuals in Erie County.

A team of Medicaid eligibility workers located within the CASA services division interview new applicants for Medicaid who are looking specifically for **Home Health Care Services**. They also do the annual financial eligibility reviews for each Medicaid home care recipient.

Access and Coordination Team

The Access and Coordination Team [ACT] is a multidimensional unit designed to help consumers access appropriate community services within the Long-term Care System. ACT is committed to the coordination of quality care, community education, and the most efficient use of Medicaid resources. ACT is responsible for receiving, reviewing, and processing all new referrals for home care services.

ACT Referral Process

A referral for CASA services can be made by calling [716] 858-2323.

After assessing the client's needs, CASA arranges for home care services for its clients. CASA clients may receive:

- Personal care aide services, which provide assistance with meal preparation, personal hygiene, dressing, etc.
- Environmental aide services, which cover assistance with household chores, meal preparation, shopping, laundry, and similar activities.
- Private duty nursing services, if continuous skilled nursing assistance is warranted.

<u>Consumer Directed Personal Attendant Program [CDPAP]</u>

If an applicant qualifies for CASA services, they may also be eligible for assistance through the **Consumer Directed Personal Attendant Program**, a unique program which allows recipients to recruit, hire, and supervise their own aides. Consumer directed attendants may also perform skilled nursing tasks under the consumer's direction.

<u>Long-term Home Health Care Program</u> [LTHHCP]

CASA also assesses Medicaid eligibility for clients in the **LTHHCP** and monitors the appropriateness of their care. LTHHCP is also referred to as a 'nursing home without walls'. The program consists of a coordinated plan of care and services that are provided at home or in adult care facilities to a person who is medically eligible for residential nursing home care. CASA also ensures that the services the LTHHCP clients receive are cost effective.

CASA is responsible for the prior approval of several Medicaid long-term care services to ensure the most appropriate, least restrictive setting and access to home-based care. This includes approving **skilled nursing facilities** and **assisted living facility** placements for all Medicaid clients.

For more information about CASA services, please call: Access and Coordination Team [ACT]

Monday - Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm. [716] 858-2323

To request a Medicaid application, questions about eligibility and/or schedule an appointment, please call:

Medicaid Eligibility Team

Monday - Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm. [716] 858-2396

Medicaid Utilization Review

The Medicaid Utilization Review (MUR) Unit is a multi-functional office that ensures appropriate utilization of Medicaid benefits for Medicaid Transportation, Home Health Reviews, Restricted Recipient Program, and Medicaid Disability Reviews.

Medical Transportation may only be approved for active and qualified Medicaid recipients. For more information or an application for transportation services call the MUR unit at [716] 858-1750.

H OME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP)

HEAP is a federally funded assistance program designed to help eligible households with the costs of heating their homes. HEAP is administered locally by the Departments of Social and Senior Services. Social Services is responsible for certification of the temporary assistance/food stamps and non-temporary assistance/food stamps under 60 population of Erie County. Senior Services is responsible for certification of and outreach to the NTA/FS, Senior Citizen (60+) population of Erie County and certain segments of the disabled population of all ages. Each season, Senior Services also conducts HEAP interviews for all segments of the population at various outreach locations throughout the county, beginning in January.

If eligible for HEAP, clients will initially receive only a Regular benefit, even if possessing a shut-off notice or having a low fuel supply. In order to apply for Emergency assistance towards a heating bill, clients must subsequently receive another shut-off notice, or subsequently have a fuel supply of less than 10 days. Regular (Renter's benefit) and Emergency Assistance may be issued simultaneously to households that pay for heat indirectly as in previous seasons

Application for HEAP Benefits

Heads of Household Under 60, Non-Disabled and Heads of Household in Receipt of Temporary Assistance or Food Stamps (not only Payee) 478 Main Street 1st Floor Buffalo, NY 14202 [716] 858-7870

FFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

The Office of Child Support Enforcement assists in the process to gain additional support for children.

For individuals in receipt of Financial Assistance or Medicaid, filing with the local Child Support Unit is automatically completed.

Individuals not currently in receipt of Financial Assistance or Medicaid may file an application at the ECDSS Child Support Office located at:

Erie County Department of Social Services 95 Franklin Street – Room 728 Buffalo, NY 14202 1-888-208-4485

Family Court Assistance

To file a petition in Family Court asking for enforcement of a current child support order, individuals should appear at the Family Court offices located at:

Family Court Building
1 Niagara Plaza
Family Court Petition Processing Unit – 4th floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

If a court order is from out of state, individuals should first contact the County Attorney's Office to schedule an appointment at [716] 858-2200.



Child Care assistance is provided for eligible individuals through a variety of programs as outlined:

Temporary Assistance Day Care is guaranteed for individuals in receipt of Temporary Assistance or Safety Net.

Transitional Day Care is provided when an individual is no longer in receipt of Temporary Assistance and has a need for day care services due to employment.

Non-Temporary Assistance Day Care is available for employed families who have income at 200% or less of the State Income Standard. Families are required to contribute to the cost of care based on a sliding income sale. This assistance is also provided to teen parents attending high school.

Preventive/Protective Services Day Care is available for children through the children's services cases when day care is mandated as part of the individual service plan.

The Day Care Unit is located at: 290 Main Street – 3rd Floor Buffalo, New York 14202

For information about day care eligibility, program requirements or questions relating to available day care providers, individuals should call [716] 858-TYKE [858-8953].

S ERVICES DIVISION

The Division of Services provides protective, preventive and permanency services for children and adults who are victims, or at risk of becoming victims, of maltreatment or exploitation. Services are designed to promote family and individual well-being, ensure prevention of and protection from abuse and neglect, and to promote permanency for children. Included are protective services for children and adults, foster care and adoption, services to prevent abuse of children and adults, and a wide range of supportive services for adults and families. A particular focus of many of these services is the maintenance of children in a permanent home environment in which their well-being and protection are assured.

Child Protective Services

The purpose of Child Protective Services (CPS) is to ensure that children are safe and to prevent any future abuse or neglect through the provision of supportive services. CPS protects children from physical abuse, neglect and sexual abuse by their parents and caretakers and helps families obtain needed services to guarantee their children are safe from harm. If an individual has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being neglected or abused, they should call the **New York Central Register at 1-800-342-3720**.

Mandated Reporters: Hospital personnel, teachers, law enforcement officers, and social service employees are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect and are subject to legal consequences if they fail to do so. Mandated reporters should call 1-800-635-1522 to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Preventive Services

Preventive Services are those supportive services and rehabilitative services provided to children and their families for the purpose of preventing out-of-home placements or expediting a discharge from placement. For information about preventive services please call the Family Services Team Intake at **858-8349**.

Foster Care and Adoption

When families fail to provide for the safety of their own children these children are placed in foster care until the risk of their safety is substantially decreased. Children placed in a foster care have been neglected, abused, or have no one to care for them.

The Adoption Units provide services to children who are legally freed from their parents and are awaiting adoption. They match children with Adoptive resources by evaluation of the child's needs. Adoption does preplacement planning and facilitates the decision making process with foster/adoptive families.

Information on becoming a Erie County Foster/Adoptive Family: [716] 858-7274.

Adult Protection

The Adult Protection Unit provides a variety of specialized protective services to vulnerable adults, ages 18-59, whose condition or circumstances make them vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation from others. Services provided are designed to strengthen the adult's capacity to function and become self-directing.

Any concerned individual (family member, friend, neighbor, professional) who observes an individual having difficulty in providing their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and medical treatment should contact the department to make a referral.

Adult Protection Referral Number: [716] 858-6877.

Erie County Department of Senior Services Adult Protection Unit (for individuals sixty (60) or over: [716] 858-6877.

Domestic Violence

The Domestic Violence Unit assesses claims of domestic violence made by recipients of Social Services to determine credibility, what extent the individuals' safety would be jeopardized by fulfilling employment, paternity, child support, spousal support, or other program requirements. Specially trained liaisons assist victims in gaining safety and independence from their abuser. Additionally, the Domestic Violence staff serves as a resource for other county government divisions and monitors contacts of private agencies providing counseling and other non-residential services.

To reach the Domestic Violence Unit call: [716] 858-1515. *ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL*.

EGAL ADVOCACY FOR THE DISABLED

The Legal Advocacy for the Disabled Unit (LAD) is dedicated solely to assisting low income individuals with the Social Security Administration's Disability application process. Applicants for services must sign a form appointing LAD as their legal representation for applications for disability claims, application and appeal forms and release of record forms.

LAD referrals may be made by contacting:

Legal Advocacy for the Disabled 43 Court Street – 4th Floor Buffalo, NY 14202

Hours of Operation:

Monday – Friday , 8:00 am – 5:00 pm . **Telephone Number:** [716] 858-1702.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

The Special Investigations Unit investigates consumer welfare fraud complaints and prepares fraud packages for the District Attorney and State welfare fraud prosecutors. It also recoups excess amounts paid out to clients and maximizes collections on all accounts established by fraud, over-grant or assistance repayment requirements.

Contacting SID

By mail at:

ECDSS

Special Investigations/Resource Division

43 Court Street

Convention Tower - 2nd Floor

Buffalo, New York 14202

Telephone Directory:

 Fraud Hot Line
 [716] 858-1886

 Burial Unit
 [716] 858-1828

 Collections
 [716] 858-1895

 Investigations
 [716] 858-1872

 Real Estate
 [716] 858-1846

 Assignment of Proceeds of Estates:
 [716] 858-1840

 Medicaid Repayment Program
 [716] 858-1839

MOST FREQUENTLY REQUESTED TELEPHONE NUMBERS

SERVICE NUMBER (AREA CODE 716)

Reporting Child Abuse/Neglect	1-800-342-3720
Fair Hearing Office	1-800-342-3334
Lost/Stolen EBT Cards	1-888-328-6399
Social Security Administration	1-800-772-1213
Child Health Plus	1-800-698-4543
Family Health Plus	1-877-934-7587
Erie County Works Center	858-8000 (automated)
Emergency Housing/Services	858-6265
Domestic Violence	858-1539
Day Care Unit	858-8953
Food Stamp Applications	858-8000
Foster Care/Adoption	858-7274
Child Support	1-888-208-4485
Landlords—lost or stolen rent checks	858-6676
Landlord Information Line:	858-6265
(rent, evictions, arrears, security deposits)	
Medicaid Applications	858-6244
Medicaid Long Term Care Eligibility	858-1901
Medical Transportation	858-4877
CASA	858-2323
HEAP Hotline	858-7644
Senior Services HEAP Hotline	858-7870
Adult Protection (up to age 59)	858-6901
Senior Services Adult Protection (60+)	858-6877
Legal Advocacy for the Disabled	858-1702
Fraud Hotline	858-1886
Erie County Family Court	845-7400

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